

Message Text

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ACTION SIG-03

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /004 W
-----103349 250318Z /61
R 241100Z AUG 78
FM AMCONSUL MADRAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4796
INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MADRAS 1369

FI CHANNEL

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ASIC
SUBJECT: POST INSPECTION - MADRAS POST MEMORANDUM

REF: STATE 201528

1. STATE OF RELATIONS WITH THE HOST COUNTRY.
SEEN FROM THE MADRAS CONSULAR DISTRICT, RELATIONS WITH INDIA ARE
VERY GOOD AT THE PRESENT TIME. SOUTH INDIA HAS ALWAYS BEEN
LESS CONCERNED WITH FOREIGN RELATIONS THAN OTHER SECTIONS OF THE
COUNTRY, BUT THE PEOPLE OF THIS AREA, GENERALLY PRO-AMERICAN,
HAVE APPLAUDED THE IMPROVING CONDITIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES
AND EXPRESSIONS OF FRIENDSHIP AND ADMIRATION FOR THE UNITED
STATES ARE COMMONPLACE HERE. THE PRESIDENTS VISIT IN INDIA IN
JANUARY OF THIS YEAR AND THE RETURN VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES
BY PRIME MINISTER DESAI IN JUNE GENERATED CONSIDERABLE GOOD WILL
IN SOUTH INDIA AND CONTRIBUTED SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE INCREASINGLY
WARM RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND THE UNITED STATES.
WHILE THERE ARE NON-JANATA GOVERNMENTS IN ALL FOUR OF THE STATES
OF SOUTH INDIA, THE CONSULATE GENERAL'S RELATIONSHIP WITH EACH
OF THE FOUR IS RELATIVELY CLOSE AS VARIOUS OFFICERS OF THE
STAFF, INCLUDING THE CONSUL GENERAL, MAINTAIN GOOD WORKING
CONTACTS IN EACH STATE. TRAVEL THROUGHOUT THE AREA
IS FREE AND EASY, AND STAFF MEMBERS OBTAIN APPOINTMENTS WITH STATE
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OFFICIALS AT ALL LEVELS WITH A MINIMUM OF DELAY. THE MAINTENANCE
OF GOOD, CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE FOUR STATE GOVERNMENTS
SERVES THE CONSULATE GENERAL WELL AS THEY ARE
NORMALLY VERY FORTHCOMING IN RESPONSE TO ANY REQUEST FOR
ASSISTANCE ON CONSULAR, TRAVEL OR OTHER OFFICIAL MATTERS.
SOUTH INDIANS ARE GENERALLY VERY FRIENDLY AND OUTGOING, AND
CONTACTS ARE EASILY ESTABLISHED.

2. ISSUES AND PROBLEMS.

AT THIS TIME THERE ARE NO MAJOR PROBLEMS OR ISSUES CONFRONTING THIS POST IN THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF ITS OBJECTIVES. HOWEVER, THE TWO AREAS OF CONCERN LISTED BELOW SHOULD BE CALLED TO THE INSPECTORS' ATTENTION:

A. CONSULAR SECTION. THE OPERATION OF THE VISA SECTION IS POTENTIALLY A REAL PUBLIC RELATIONS PROBLEM FOR THE CONSULATE GENERAL AS SOME PEOPLE IN MADRAS - AND IN OTHER CITIES OF THE CONSULATE DISTRICT TO A LESSER DEGREE - HAVE BECOME CRITICAL OF THE TREATMENT ALLEGEDLY GIVEN VISA APPLICANTS. IN AN AREA SOMETIMES MORE PREOCCUPIED WITH LOCAL ISSUES THAN NATIONAL ISSUES, THIS COULD BECOME AN IRRITANT IN OUR RELATIONS IN SOUTH INDIA. COMPLAINTS HEARD MOST OFTEN INCLUDE (1) WHAT INDIANS CONSIDER CAPRICIOUS AND SUBJECTIVE REFUSALS OF NIVS, (2) WHAT INDIANS CONSIDER IRRELEVANT AND UNNECESSARILY INTENSIVE QUESTIONING DURING VISA INTERVIEWS, (3) THE LIMITED NUMBER OF APPLICANTS INTERVIEWED EACH DAY, AND (4) THE QUEUE OF NIV APPLICANTS WHICH REPORTEDLY FORMS IN THE EARLY MORNINZZ HURS.

B. POST ADMINISTRATION. THE ABSENCE OF A BACK-UP COMMUNICATOR TO RELIEVE THE CRO FROM TIME-TO-TIME IS A CONTINUING PROBLEM FOR THE POST, AS THE CRO IS ON CALL TWENTY-FOUR HOURS A DAY, SEVEN DAYS A WEEK FOR LONG PERIODS WITHOUT ANY BREAK. THE PRESSURES ON THE CRO MOUNT WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME, AND THE POINT IS REACHED WHERE HE MUST HAVE RELIEF.

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3. EVALUATION OF ACCOMPLISHMENT OF POLICIES OR PROGRAM OBJECTIVES.

THE POST'S RELATIONS WITH THE EMBASSY ARE EXCELLENT. CONTACT IS MAINTAINED ON AN ALMOST DAILY BASIS, AND GUIDANCE FROM THE EMBASSY IS THOROUGH AND COMPLETE. ALMOST EVERY OFFICER ON THE CONSULATE GENERAL STAFF IS CAPABLE OF PERFORMING MORE THAN ONE FUNCTION, WHICH GIVES US MORE FLEXIBILITY THAN WE WOULD NORMALLY HAVE. EFFORTS ARE MADE TO KEEP ALL SUBSTANTIVE OFFICERS WELL-INFORMED ON WHAT OTHER SECTIONS OF THE CONSULATE GENERAL ARE DOING, SO THAT ANY OFFICER CAN RELIEVE ANOTHER ON SHORT NOTICE. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE CONSULATE GENERAL AND USICA/MADRAS ARE EXTREMELY GOOD, AS CLOSE AND REGULAR CONTACT IS MAINTAINED BETWEEN CONGEN OFFICERS AND USICA OFFICERS ON A DAILY BASIS. ICA IS ON DISTRIBUTION FOR ALL INCOMING SUBSTANTIVE MESSAGES, AND ICA OFFICERS ATTEND THE CONGEN STAFF MEETINGS. THE CONSUL GENERAL EXERCISES CLOSE SUPERVISION OF ALL SECTIONS OF THE CONSULATE GENERAL AND OFFERS GUIDANCE AND ADVICE WHEN AND WHERE NEEDED. THE POST MAINTAINS CONTACT WITH KODAIKANAL SCHOOL, WHICH IS ATTENDED BY A NUMBER OF OFFICIAL CHILDREN FROM OTHER POSTS, BUT THERE ARE NO US DEPENDENT CHILDREN OF SCHOOL AGE IN MADRAS AT THE PRESENT TIME. THE POST NO LONGER OPERATES ITS SMALL COMMISSARY.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MADRAS 1369

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WE BELIEVE THAT THE MADRAS CONSULATE GENERAL HAS BEEN HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL IN THIS ROLE AS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT IN SOUTH INDIA. CONTACTS WITH GOI REPRESENTATIVES IN THE AREA, STATE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FIGURES, BUSINESSMEN, AND CULTURAL GROUPS ARE EXTREMELY GOOD. REPORTING ON POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IS, WE BELIEVE, GOOD, ANY SIGNIFICANT EVENT HAS GONE UNREPORTED. VISA ISSUANCE HAS ASSUMED A GREATER DIMENSION AS THE VISA FUNCTION HAS BECOME AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN INDO-US RELATIONS. WELFARE AND PROTECTION IS ALSO AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT FUNCTION IN AN AREA IN WHICH 513 U.S. CITIZENS ARE REGISTERED AND WHICH AN ESTIMATED 600 TOURISTS VISIT EACH YEAR. SOUTH INDIA IS A DISTINCTLY DIFFERENT PART OF INDIA. IT IS THE ONLY MAJOR SECTION OF INDIA IN WHICH NO-JANATA GOVERNMENTS PREDOMINATE. IN LIGHT OF THE MORE PRONOUNCED NORTH-SOUTH CLEAVAGE, AND THE TREND TOWARD REGIONALIZATION WHICH GAINED SOME MOMENTUM IN THE LAST YEAR, THE CONSULATE GENERAL'S FUNCTION AS A LISTENING POST HAS GROWN IN SIGNIFICANCE AS WE HAVE WATCHED THESE DEVELOPMENTS FROM THE SOUTHERN VANTAGE POINT AND HAVE REPORTED ON THEM FROM THE SOUTH INDIAN PERSPECTIVE. WE BELIEVE THAT WE HAVE CONTRIBUTED SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE EMBASSY'S ASSESSMENT OF THESE TRENDS WHICH COULD BE TROUBLESOME FOR INDIA IN THE COMING FEW YEARS.

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